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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TIRANA 000028

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR/SCE:JISMAIL  
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STATE PASS TO USAID/DCHA FOR SREICHLE, JBRAUSE; DCHA/OFDA FOR  
USAID/OFDA ACONVERY, RANDREW, SBALLOU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [SENV](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [AL](#)  
SUBJECT: ALBANIA FLOOD DISASTER DECLARATION

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1.(SBU) This is an action request--please see Paragraph 13.

2.(SBU)Summary: Severe flooding due to rains and melting snow in northern Albania has affected 11,000 people with 5000 people evacuated and 6000 remaining behind in the flooded areas. All 11,000 inhabitants require some level of assistance including food, clean water, clothing, and shelter. The area's roads, bridges, water supply, and agriculture infrastructure have sustained damage. Water continues to rise in some areas, flooding is widespread, and weather forecasts indicate more rain to come. The GOA has declared an "Emergency Situation" and requested international assistance. It is in the interest of the USG to provide assistance. The USG declares that the emergency is such that it is requesting USG international disaster response. ED SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND -----

3.(SBU)Since January 4, heavy rains in northern Albania have caused serious flooding. A large portion of the coastal lowland concentrated in the Shkoder and Lzazgo. Tetovo Shkoder itself is not low, but surrounding villages are. As of January 13, flood waters have covered 10,000 hectares of arable land and isolated or flooded over 2500 houses, forcing the evacuation of 5000 people.

4.(SBU)Further complicating matters, local media has reported that the majority of inhabitants in the flooded areas (6000 people) refuse to evacuate and abandon their livestock, so authorities are forcing evacuations in some areas.

5. (SBU) A major landslide has closed a road in the affected area and there are concerns that additional landslides will hamper relief efforts.

6. (SBU)The Albanian Red Cross has been providing initial assistance, especially to the Roma families affected, including food, blankets and hygiene items from their existing stock. Evacuees are being assisted in schools, religious centres and military camps.

GOVERNMENT OF ALBANIA RESPONSE  
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7. (SBU) The Prime Minister, Sali Berisha, and the Chair of the Parliament visited the flooded areas on January 5. The government has established a Committee of Civil Emergency and the Prime Minister ordered maximum engagement from the army and all civilian ministries. On January 11, the UN and GOA jointly convened the diplomatic community to coordinate donor response. The GOA has officially requested assistance from NATO countries, it has requested international assistance and is readily accepting assistance from all donors.

8. (SBU)At the January 11 meeting the GOA said it needs help providing food, medicine, transport, pumps and coordination. This tracks with what is being heard from other sources and accurately reflects needs to the best of our knowledge.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE -----

¶9. (SBU)Post would use assistance provided through this disaster declaration to provide support to the Albanian Red Cross by providing \$50,000 for it to purchase blankets, food, and hygiene kits to help approximately 2000 people directly affected by the flooding. Other organizations are ready to assist, including the US NGO World Vision.

10.(SBU)The UN is providing technical assistance through the Albanian government to help coordinate donor assistance. The GOA is seeking and accepting assistance from all sources that have offered which includes the EU, NATO member countries and regional governments.

11.(SBU)USAID/Albania is reviewing its on-going assistance projects, particularly in the areas of agriculture, floodplain planning, and post-disaster health interventions to target those resources for medium to long-term assistance to the affected areas.

¶12. (SBU) The watershed area for this flooding extends into the neighboring countries of Macedonia and Montenegro. With reservoirs at capacity and more snow and rain likely through the spring, this situation will remain dynamic for some months. Mission may request additional funds for recovery and reconstruction.

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DISASTER DECLARATION

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¶13. (SBU) Due to the humanitarian effects of the flooding in northern Albania, I hereby declare that an emergency exists and that the situation warrants a disaster declaration as defined by OFDA regulations, and that it is in the interests of the USG to provide humanitarian assistance. The GOA has requested assistance. USAID/OFDA is requested to send \$50,000 to USAID Albania for support to the Albanian Red Cross as described above.

¶14. (SBU) Post will continue to closely track the situation and remain in close contact with OFDA through post's Mission Disaster Relief Officer as the situation evolves and any other needs emerge.

WITHERS